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Good news about area roads

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This newspaper has expressed concern about some aspects of the stimulus package approved by Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama. Strong action by the federal government to jump-start our sluggish economy is needed. That requires a mix of targeted spending and tax cuts designed to create jobs with a future and generate the private sector investment critical to economic growth.

The stimulus package would have served the nation better had it included more provisions to encourage investment - tax cuts - and less spending on projects of dubious value.

That said, however, those federal dollars that will support infrastructure projects are an especially wise investment in the future. They will generate new construction jobs in the relatively near future, thereby helping an industry that is especially hard-hit by this recession. Of even greater importance, however, is the long-term impact of such projects on the economy. Money spent to improve the transportation system through repairing and upgrading roads and bridges produces benefits far into the future.

There is good news in this regard from the Iowa Department of Transportation. Several area highway and bridge projects are about to be fast-tracked. This apparently has been made possible by the expectation that there will soon be an influx of substantial stimulus money for highways - \$238.2 million.

IDOT has announced that the following projects have been moved forward on the Five-Year Plan for Highway Improvements:

- Paving the shoulders of U.S. Highway 20 between Webster County Road P59 and the border of Webster and Hamilton counties.
- Replacing a bridge on U.S. Highway 69 in Jewell in Hamilton County at a cost of \$633,000.
- Repairing pavement on U.S. Highway 18 west of U.S. Highway 169 near Algona in Kossuth County at a cost of \$275,000.
- Repairing pavement on U.S. Highway 169 from a point one-half mile south of Humboldt to Iowa Highway 3 at a cost of \$250,000.

All of those projects have been moved into the current fiscal year. The bridge job in Jewell was originally set for next year. The projects in Algona and Humboldt were scheduled for 2013. Many other projects across the state are also being moved up on the five-year plan.

Gov. Chet Culver announced Friday that stimulus monies will also make possible the resurfacing of Iowa Highway 7 from the border of Calhoun and Webster counties to U.S. Highway 169 in Fort Dodge.

The Messenger applauds the decision by state officials to move aggressively to get these important projects under way sooner than had originally been anticipated.

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